

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women

Other name/site number: Adkins Antiques

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 1103 Berry Street

City or town: Houston

State: Texas

County: Harris

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this

☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D_____
State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official / Title

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria._____
Signature of commenting or other official_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register☐ determined eligible for the National Register☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register☐ other, explain: __________
Signature of the Keeper_____
Date of Action

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling; HEALTH CARE / Nursing Home

Current Functions: VACANT; COMMERCE / Professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS / Prairie School; Craftsman

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Concrete, Wood

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-# through 7-#)

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Social History

Period of Significance: 1922-1971

Significant Dates: 1922

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-# through 8-#)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 9-# through 9-#)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.3587 Acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (use decimal degree format):

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 29.738584° Longitude: -95.377895°

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 6 & 7, and TRS 8A & 12 Block 3 MacGregor South End, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Boundary Justification: The boundary contains all property historically associated with the nominated resource.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Yasmin Arslan, Hannah Curry-Shearouse, Kerry Goelzer, Anna Mod, Victoria Myers
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Date: September 2017

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-# through Map-#)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-# through Figure-#)

Photographs (see continuation sheet Photo-# through Photo-#)

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women

City or Vicinity: Houston

County, State: Harris County, TX

Photographer: SWCA Environmental Consultants

Date Photographed: April 2017

Description of Photograph(s): South façade and partial view east elevation, view northwest.

Photograph Number: 0001

Date Photographed: April 2017

Description of Photograph(s): West elevation and south façade, view northeast. Enclosed port cochere visible on the left.

Photograph Number: 0002

Date Photographed: April 2017

Description of Photograph(s): North and west elevations, view southeast. Non-historic fire escape and enclosed port cochere visible

Photograph Number: 0003

Date Photographed: June 2017

Description of Photograph(s): North elevation (right) and non-contributing metal storage building (left), view south

Photograph Number: 0004

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): East elevation, view southwest. Enclosed porch (first floor) and sleeping porch (second floor) both visible on the left.

Photograph Number: 0005

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Detail, front entrance on the south façade with non-original hand rail on the front steps, view north.

Photograph Number: 0006

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor front entry hall view north. Original grand staircase with detailing, hard wood flooring, and columns all visible.

Photograph Number: 0007

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor living room, view northwest towards entry hall (left) and dining room (right). Original grand staircase, columns, ceiling, and flooring visible.

Photograph Number: 0008

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor living room fireplace with dining room visible on left, view northeast.

Photograph Number: 0009

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Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor east porch, view southeast. A visible line on the wall and ceiling shows where the room was once subdivided.

Photograph Number: 0010

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor stair hall view south. The unfinished wood on the wall and the change in ceiling materials above indicates this as the elevator's original location.

Photograph Number: 0011

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor bedroom with fireplace, view northeast. A line on the floor indicates where there may once have been a wall to create a hallway to the porch (background).

Photograph Number: 0012

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor former sleeping porch space, view southeast.

Photograph Number: 0013

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor northwest bedroom, view southeast.

Photograph Number: 0014

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor detail of column capitals in entry hall.

Photograph Number: 0015

Date Photographed: March 2017

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor detail of original stained glass window located at the top of the grand staircase, view west.

Photograph Number: 0016

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Narrative Description

The Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women is located on a 0.36-acre lot at 1103 Berry Street positioned at the intersection of Fannin and Berry Street in the Midtown neighborhood of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The home serves as an example of the asymmetrical, hipped roof subtype of Prairie School style domestic architecture with some elements of Craftsman style architecture. The two-and-one-half story, wood frame brick veneer building features a hipped roof, wide overhanging eaves, an open air porch, three round dormers, two brick chimneys, and retains most of its original wooden double hung sash windows and casement windows. Constructed circa 1913, the house appears to have originally served as a spec home, although there is no record of the architect or builder.¹ In 1922 it was purchased to serve as the Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women. The house is elevated approximately four feet on a raised combination perimeter grade beam and pier and beam foundation. Many interior architectural features like original hardwood floors, doors, wood trim, the main staircase, brick fireplaces, stained glass windows, columns, and wooden ceiling beams are extant throughout the house. Alterations include side and rear additions completed before and around 1961. The former lawn is now mostly paved with brick and concrete and a combination chain-link and metal picket fence surrounds the property. There is a mature Live Oak tree directly west of the front entry portico.

Location and Setting

The Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women's primary (south) façade fronts onto Berry Street positioned within the downtown Houston street grid laid out with Buffalo Bayou as the assumed northern terminus of Main Street (true north is approximately 20 degrees to the northwest). Located on a 0.36-acre lot on the northeast corner of the Fannin and Berry intersection, the building is approximately 5,386 square feet and bounded by Berry Street to the south, Fannin Street to the west, a hardscaped driveway on the north, and surface parking on the east. A non-contributing, prefabricated, metal frame warehouse added in 1993 sits to the east of the house.²

The surrounding area, historically known as the predominantly residential South End, began to lose residents as the streetcar and automobile spurred development of the city even further south in the 1920s and 1930s. South End began to see influx of commercial use properties as formerly residential streets became major thoroughfares through South End connecting the new suburbs with the city center.³ Some of the original single-family residences were either demolished, converted to apartments, or repurposed for commercial use. In addition to an increase in commercial business in the area, rapid suburbanization encouraged the remaining residents to leave, while new highway construction isolated the area from the other residential neighborhoods surrounding.⁴ By the 1960s, there were so few residents remaining that commercial occupancy began to decline as well.⁵ While there was a study for potential redevelopment of South End in the 1970s, it was not until the 1990s when Midtown, as it was now known, saw reinvestment in the neighborhood through tax incentives. Today commercial, multifamily, and institutional buildings currently characterize the area. Very few of the historic residential buildings remain and those that do remain, like this property, have been converted for commercial, multi-family, or institutional use.

The house is one block west of the former San Jacinto Senior High School (NRHP 2012), now the administrative building for the Houston Community College Central Campus. Other historically designated buildings nearby include

¹ The first recorded resident for the house is Edwin Larendon in 1913, who is buried in Beth Israel Cemetery in Houston. Following Larendon's relocation, the house was purchased by Ben Levy, the secretary-treasurer for Sakowitz department stores. Levy lived in the house until it became the Flake Home. Information from City of Houston Directories, courtesy Jim Parsons and Preservation Houston.

² Harris County CAD, <https://public.hcad.org/records/Print.asp?taxyear=2017&acct=0250270000018&card=1&bld=1>, accessed 18 July 2017.

³ Timothy Kirwin, *"It was like a neglected beauty": the Redevelopment of One Houston Neighborhood – Midtown*. Master's thesis, University of Houston, 2001, pg. 16.

⁴ Ibid., pg. 17.

⁵ Ibid., pg. 18.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Isabella Court (NRHP 1994), Trinity Church (NRHP 1983), First Evangelical Church (NRHP 2006), and Temple Beth Israel (NRHP 1984).

Exterior

The asymmetrical, two-and-one-half story with partial basement wood frame house is clad with brick veneer. It has a composition shingle hipped roof with two broad, flat, interior brick chimneys, and round dormers with multi-light arched casement windows centered on the south, east and west elevations. The house retains most of its original 9/1 wooden double hung sash windows, multi-light casement doors, sidelights and transoms, which are typical of both the Prairie and Craftsman styles.⁶ Historic alterations to the two-story porch retain the multi-light casement doors, sidelights and transoms with distinctive beveled glass.

Primary (South) Elevation

The first bay of the primary (south) elevation is the recessed, enclosed porte cochere. Bay two has a one-story portico supported by square brick columns with chamfered corners that highlights the entrance. The portico has a flat roof with full entablature. The primary wooden entry door has solid, lower panels with a six-light upper. Multi-light sidelights flank the entry door and three-part transom spans the door and sidelights. The transom has two four lights segments over each sidelight and a ten-light segment over the door. A second wood door with large, square glass section over small panels serves as a protective exterior door for the main door. An open-air L-plan porch extends the remaining three bays and turns one bay to the north. The porch has tiled concrete deck and a brick balustrade with an undulating limestone cap. This open-air porch connects to the enclosed, two-story porch on the east elevation. The third and fourth-bays have tall, multi-light casement doors with single multi-light transoms.

The second floor above the portico has wood panel and divided light casement doors with a transom (now infilled) flanked by narrow double hung 9/1 wooden sash windows. There are physical remnants of a balustrade along with historical photos that show angled corner pedestals to mimic the chamfered brick portico columns below (Figures 8 and 11). The remaining third and fourth bays each have a single wooden double hung 9/1 sash windows. The flat roofed fifth bay is an enclosed, two story porch. The fifth bay's enclosed porch contains three grouped 12/1 sash windows flanked by Doric-capped pilasters.

West Elevation

The seven bay west elevation facing Fannin Street is also asymmetrical. The first bay features a one-story addition to the north (rear) of the house. The first floor retains its original wooden windows in the second, third and sixth bays: the second bay has a small, narrow 2/2 wooden sash window. The third has paired 9/1 wooden sash windows. The fourth and fifth bays are the enclosed porte cochère and has the same undulating porch balustrade with limestone cap and square brick columns as the front porch. The infill between the brick columns is stucco with a single non-historic 6/6 wooden sash window in each bay. The final bay is the front portico. The second floor has 9/1 windows in the second and third bays. Two stacked multi-light fixed wooden windows punctuate the fourth bay and a tripartite stained-glass window is positioned in the fifth. The sixth bay contains a quadruple grouping of short three-light casement windows that align with the upper sash seen in bay three. A metal fire escape extends from the roof of the first bay one-story recessed addition and lands in front of the paired windows of the third bay.

North (Rear) Elevation

⁶ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2nd Edition, Knopf: New York, 2013.

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The first bay of the north, or rear, elevation is the enclosed two-story porch with multi-light beveled glass casement doors, sidelights, and transoms on the first floor; there are 12/1 sash windows on the second floor flanked by paired pilasters with Doric capitals. This elevation features concrete steps flanked with a rounded concrete banister leading to multi-light casement doors surrounded by multi-light sidelights and transoms. The second bay, a later porch addition, has similar concrete steps with rounded concrete side rails with a French door with multi-light sidelights and transoms. The third, fourth, and fifth bays, also a later addition, are irregularly divided by square, brick columns that extend above the roof; the fifth bay is slightly narrower and has a door leading into the partial basement level. There are paired 9/1 wooden double hung sash windows in upper portion of the third and fourth bays with the lower half solid brick that covers the raised foundation. The fifth bay has a divided light window with a single-light paneled door exit door below flanked by sidelights. The second floor has a single 9/1 wooden sash window in the second bay and paired, double hung 9/1 wooden sash windows between the fourth and fifth bays. There is a multi-light casement door above the third bay. The last bay is the north elevation of the enclosed porte cochère.

East Elevation

The asymmetrical east elevation has seven bays. The first is the open-air porch while the third and fourth are identical and include the enclosed two-story porch. On the enclosed porch, there are multi-light beveled glass casement doors, sidelights, and transoms on the first floor, and there are 9/1 wooden sash windows on the second floor flanked by pilasters with Doric capitals. There are 9/1 double hung wooden sash windows on the second floor of the second, fifth, and sixth bays. The extra-wide sixth bay also contains a multi-light door with a multi-light transom above. This door provides access to the balcony on the second floor. The first floor of the second bay has a multi-light casement door with multi-light transom. This element is repeated in the fifth bay only as a window. The first floor of the sixth bay has quadruple grouped 9/1 double hung, wooden sash windows.

Interior

The floor plan is an asymmetrical side hall. The floor plan appears to be original, however, only four bedrooms on the second floor does not match with accounts of individual rooms for ten residents of the Flake Home, plus the common areas. Common interior materials throughout the house include hardwood floors, wood trim, wooden paneled interior doors, plastered walls and high ceilings. Some of the first floor walls have been covered with pegboard, but the original plaster and wood trim is extant beneath. The entry hall retains its original exposed wood ceiling - a regular grid of exposed wood beams with plaster infill with a central diamond pattern. The regular wood and plaster ceiling treatment repeats in the two rooms to the east of the hall (living and dining rooms). The original wooded stair, flanked by smooth, round, Ionic columns on wood pedestals retains its original wooden balustrade, risers and treads. A small hall to the right of the stair leads to the rear of the house. Behind the staircase is a small closet, an under the stair half bath, a small hallway, and secondary staircase.

To the right, or east, of the entry hall is a wide opening to the living room. The opening has fluted square pilasters with fluted Ionic columns in antis. Like the entry, the living room ceiling has the wooden and plaster ceiling. Centered on the east wall of the living room is the original brick fireplace. To the south, or right, of the fireplace are paired, narrow multi-light casement doors with multi-light transom and corresponding screen doors that opens to the porch. There are two identical doors with transoms that open to the south elevation porch. To the left, or north, of the fireplace is a door opening with multi-light transom that opens to a room on the east elevation that was formerly a porch or sunroom. This former sunroom has its original brick walls though currently painted, its original terracotta tile floor, and beaded board ceiling style. The beaded board itself is a mix of original material and replacement boards.

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The dining room has the same ceiling grid of wooden beams and plaster. A set of pocket doors is extant between the living and dining rooms. Doors matching the living room exterior doors lead from the dining room to a small rear entry on the northeast corner, another formerly open air porch now enclosed. There is an additional opening with an original single pocket door leading from the dining room to the stair side hall. Another doorway opening to the rear of the house retains hinge scars, indicating that the opening once had a swing door with the same letter-etched diamond glass as used on the door in the north room.

In the northeast corner of the house is a small rear entry, formerly a porch or sunroom that has brick walls and terracotta tile flooring. Also on the north elevation of the house is a second rear former porch, now interior space. While this northern rear porch has its exposed original brick walls like the sunroom and small rear entry, the floor is wood. There is a window opening on the south wall leading to the kitchen, however the window has been removed. A wooden door with a diamond shaped leaded glass light connects the rear porch to the pantry. There is an opening for a full-width door between the rear porch and the rear hall. The opening retains the wood frame, multi-light transom.

The rear stair hallway leads to two rooms in the enclosed porte cochere on the west elevation. Both spaces have a mix of brick, stucco and gypsum board walls. The front room has vinyl flooring and an enclosed window on the wall it shares with the half bath. There are two doors – one a wood frame unit with large glass panel leading to the stair hallway and a wood frame multi-light unit leading to the rear room. The rear room has modern laminate flooring and a wood panel door leading to the rear stair hallway. Opposite to the enclosed porte cochere is a wood panel and divided light door that opens to the partial utility basement stair.

Like the front stair, the rear stair has a simple wood picket baluster. Instead of columns, however, the rear stair has a box newel post. Both staircases are switchback style. The front stair and back stairs have a landing between the two stories. West elevation windows are visible from the staircases – the stained-glass windows in the front stair and the two fixed windows in the rear stair. In addition to leading to the second story, the rear stair provides attic access. Articles on the Flake Home indicate that there was an elevator, which was located in the hallway between the front and back of the house. The location on the second floor is identified by a section of infilled flooring, and there is missing ceiling on the corresponding section of the first floor. A bump out on the wall is centered on these sections and likely hides the vertical track for the elevator.

Upstairs, there are four bedrooms, two bathrooms, an enclosed balcony on the east, and a small room of undetermined use. The bedrooms, small room, and hallway floors are all wood, with round tile on the raised bathroom floors and hexagonal tile flooring on the raised tub flooring, and wood decking on the enclosed balcony. Many of the door openings do not have interior doors, but most original transoms remain between the bedrooms and hallways. Extant doors vary between wooden five panel type, single wood doors, or paired wood doors. The bedroom in the southwest corner has multi-light casement doors leading to the front porch roof. In the southeast corner bedroom is a fireplace with tile surround. This bedroom and the northeast corner bedroom provide access to the enclosed balcony. The front bathroom, which connects the east bedrooms, has a raise platform for the tub. Both bathrooms have tile on the lower half of the walls. The northwest corner bedroom and the small room on the northeast corner both have full-length windows opening with multi-light casement doors and multi-light transoms onto the rear porch roof with access to the rear fire escape stair.

Locked interior and exterior basement doors prevented inspection of the space. Brick and concrete pavers cover the site surrounding the house, although a mature Live Oak tree remains on the southwest corner of the lot. Sanborn maps show a two-story apartment/dwelling and a one-story shed on the northeast corner of the lot that were removed. A non-contributing prefabricated metal warehouse, constructed in 1993, currently occupies this space and much of the rest of the east portion of the lot. The apartment/dwelling was likely used as part of the Flake Home's operations, but lack of precise evidence obscures its exact function. Chain-link and metal fencing surround the entire parcel.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Summary

The 1913 Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women at 1103 Berry Street in Houston is an exceptionally intact local example of Prairie Style residential architecture with some Craftsman details. The house retains many of its original character defining elements including its asymmetrical massing and wood frame brick veneer form, wooden double hung multi-light sash windows, exterior doors, front portico and porch, and most of the original floor plan and interior finishes. The windows and doors are especially characteristic of both Prairie and Craftsman styles. The roof, with wide, boxed eaves, are typical of the Prairie style. Also typical of the Prairie style are the broad, flat chimneys, the massive square porch columns, and the contrasting caps on the porches and chimneys. The trellised two-story porch is a typical Craftsman elaboration. Alterations to enclose the side and rear porches and the porte cochere are visually obvious and appear to be historic age modifications. The building retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling. Changes to the surrounding neighborhood diminish the integrity of setting and association. However, the building is one of the last remaining houses in what was once known as Houston's South End neighborhood.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Statement of Significance

Upon her death in 1915, Maria Eliza Boswell Flake's last will and testament directed her trustees to purchase and operate a home in Houston for elderly women with little means and no remaining family. Originally, her trustees were charged with constructing a home at the corner of Texas Avenue and San Jacinto on the site of Flake's own residence, but the plan was unfeasible and instead they purchased the Prairie School house at 1103 Berry Street. In 1922, they purchased the residence and converted it into the Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women. The home served this purpose until 1971 when it was sold and became an architectural antique business. The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Social History as a significant and unique example of a small, private, nonsectarian Progressive Era elder care facility specifically targeted toward women that reflected evolving attitudes about reform and social responsibility. The period of significance for this house begins in 1922 when the home was purchased and ends with its closure in 1971, less than 50 years ago. During this time, the home served the same function under largely the same organizational and funding structure which justifies extending the period of significance to 1971 without claiming Criteria Consideration G for exceptional significance.

South End (now Midtown)

From the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Houston political subdivisions were geographically based on the ward system – first with four and then growing to six before officials abolished it in 1905.⁷ Although no longer associated with any political district, native Houstonians still refer to inner city geographic areas by their old ward names.⁸ While the Flake House is in the area currently known as Midtown, historically it was within the Third Ward and one block from Fourth Ward. However, due to its location on the southern boundaries of the city in the early 1900s, the area was commonly known as the South End.⁹

Houston's growth in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries is a direct result of transportation improvements and the discovery of oil in the region. As the city grew, wealthy Houstonians relocated to areas south and west of downtown, and built large complexes with houses, outbuildings, and gardens – many of which occupied entire city blocks. Early South End houses were built in popular Victorian styles, such as Queen Anne and Folk Victorian, while others were more modern architectural styles such as Craftsman and Prairie School. As residential development in South End expanded, institutional buildings such as the 1913 San Jacinto Senior (formerly South End Junior) High School (NRHP 2012) and improved infrastructure followed. Houston's continued growth in the first decade of the twentieth century, growing from 45,000 in 1900 to 79,000 in 1910, encouraged more commercial development in the South End.¹⁰ Commercial buildings replaced many residences as residents moved to new, deed restricted communities in suburban areas.¹¹

During the 1920s and early 1930s the South End was no longer popular with Houston's affluent residents. The streetcar and automobile allowed Houstonians to move further from the city center, facilitating new residential neighborhoods such as Montrose, River Oaks, Old Braeswood, Courtlandt Place, and Westmoreland.¹² Main Street stretched further to the

⁷ Fox, Stephen. for WARDS: Ten Driving Tours Through Houston's Original Wards. Houston: Rice Design Alliance, 2015, pp 2-3.

⁸ Fox, Stephen. for WARDS: Ten Driving Tours Through Houston's Original Wards. Houston: Rice Design Alliance, 2015, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Fox, Stephen. for WARDS: Ten Driving Tours Through Houston's Original Wards. Houston: Rice Design Alliance, 2015, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ "Historical Population: 1900 to 2017," City of Houston Planning Department, January 2017

https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/Demographics/docs_pdfs/Cy/hist_pop_1900_2017.pdf

¹¹ Recorded Texas Historic Landmark for the W.T. Carter, Sr. House #14 Courtland Place, Houston, Texas. SWCA Environmental Consultants (Roger Ciuffo and Anna Mod), 2012.

¹² Timothy Kirwin, *"It was like a neglected beauty": The Redevelopment of One Houston Neighborhood – Midtown*. Master's thesis, University of Houston, 2001, pg. 15.

south, and in 1917 ended at what is now Holcombe Boulevard.¹³ The additional length saw the establishment of Hermann Park (1914), Museum of Fine Arts Houston (1924), and the Rice Institute (now Rice University, 1912).¹⁴ Unfortunately, as the city expanded south, formerly residential streets became major thoroughfares through the South End, driving residents to quieter neighborhoods.¹⁵ By the 1930s, the neighborhood had changed dramatically, and the area around the Flake home was no longer predominantly residential.

Through the 1930s, the single-family residences that once dominated the area were either demolished or adapted for commercial use. This trend continued through the 1930s and 1940s and increased in intensity during the 1950s.¹⁶ In addition to an increase in commercial business in the area, rapid suburbanization encouraged the remaining residents to leave, while new highway construction isolated the area from the other residential neighborhoods surrounding.¹⁷

By the 1960s, commerce began to wane.¹⁸ The City of Houston began studying the area for redevelopment in a 1975 study, though little came of that study. However, in 1994, after more than two years of tireless efforts, several local business owners and community stake holders successfully created the Midtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ).¹⁹ Since the TIRZ was established, the property value of TIRZ properties has increased from \$211 million to over \$1.6 billion.²⁰

Today the area, known as Midtown, is a mix of commercial, retail, social service agencies, multifamily residential with very few of the original residences remaining. Those that do remain, like this property, have commercial, multi-family, or institutional uses. The Main Campus of Houston Community College (HCC) covers most of the adjoining parcels and blocks to the southeast. Built in 1913 with later additions, San Jacinto Senior (formerly South End Junior) High School (NRHP 2012) serves as the Administration Building for the HCC campus. The former Temple Beth Israel (NRHP 1984), built in 1925, serves is now the HCC Theater Department's Heinen Theater²¹ Other significant buildings in the area are Isabella Court (NRHP 1994), Trinity Church (NRHP 1983), and First Evangelical Church (NRHP 2006).

The Progressive Era

The Progressive Era typically refers to the first two decades of the twentieth century, marked by the advent of activism and reform during these years.²² Many major changes to the nation's social and political landscape occurred during the Progressive Era, including Women's Suffrage, Prohibition, and labor movements ultimately resulting in the establishment of the United States Department of Labor. In addition to these national activities, many women of means, predominantly white women, established and joined volunteer organizations to advocate for social reform on a number of issues such as child welfare, poverty, and civic improvement.²³ The Progressive Era focused only on issues affecting white people, and progressives often actively worked to continue racial segregation in order to reduce social stratification of whites.²⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 15.

¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 17.

¹⁷ Ibid., pg. 17.

¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 18.

¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 66.

²⁰ "Who we are," Midtown Houston, n.d. Accessed July 24, 2017 <https://midtownhouston.com/affiliated-organizations/mra/>

²¹ Speck, Dr. Pat, First Evangelical Church National Register of Historic Places Nomination, September 2006.

²² Judith N. McArthur, Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes: the Twentieth-Century Experience*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, pg. 2.

²³ Ibid., pg. 2.

²⁴ Ibid., pg. 2.

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During the Progressive Era, Texas grew from a state of just over 3 million people to a state with a population of over 4.6 million. Changes to Texas' economy, notably the growth of industry and commerce during the early 20th century, supported urbanization and encouraged the growth of Texas' three largest cities, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston. Increased urbanization brought on new and complex urban issues that the Progressives worked to address. However, their work was not limited to urban areas. By the end of the era, Texas' economy was still predominantly agricultural with two thirds of its population still living in rural areas. While Texas' primary cash crop, cotton, prospered in this period, endemic poverty was widespread in rural areas.²⁵

Women in Texas during the Progressive Era expressed their activism through "maternalism," loosely defined as approaching societal problems through mothers' eyes.²⁶ Progressive women focused on children, most notably medicine and education, manifesting through an emphasis on "public health, public education, child welfare, and moral reform."²⁷ Women in Dallas successfully campaigned for the city to construct a water filtration plant, while the ladies of Houston successfully lobbied for a free, public library that opened in 1904.²⁸ In smaller towns, the members of the local women's club often served as the town's health department, supervising and inspecting dairies, bakeries, and grocers for violations in the name of public health.²⁹ Texas women also took the lead on ensuring that child labor laws were enforced, and they successfully lobbied for compulsory public education, including extending the ages of children required to attend and the number of days they had to spend in school during the 1910s.³⁰

Progressives in this period focused on ways to improve family life through education, public health, and improved labor conditions. With their efforts concentrated on children, the elderly only benefited tangentially from activism aimed at poverty. A 1904 census demonstrated that the elderly, ages 60 and older, constituted the largest percentage of almshouse entrants.³¹ Though only approximately 2% of Americans in this age bracket lived in an institution, 57% of the institutionalized elderly lived in almshouses, with the remaining living in mental institutions.³² Social Security was not enacted until 1935, causing the elderly to rely on their families financially once they left the workforce. Without focused activism directly on elderly causes during the Progressive Era, the elderly seeking to avoid institutions or reliance on their families were forced to find their own solutions like private care facilities.

Maria Boswell Flake

Maria Eliza Boswell Flake was born in 1834 to parents Jonas Boswell and Harriet E. (Smith) Gregory Boswell, in Wetumka, Alabama.³³ Her parents graduated from medical college in Philadelphia and Flake herself attended Collegiate

²⁵ Lewis L. Gould, "Progressive Era," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npp01>

²⁶ Judith N. McArthur, Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes: the Twentieth-Century Experience*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, pg. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

²⁸ Judith N. McArthur, Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes: the Twentieth-Century Experience*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, pg. 11; Diana J. Kleiner, "Houston Public Library," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lch02> accessed September 21, 2017.

²⁹ Judith N. McArthur, Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes: the Twentieth-Century Experience*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, pg. 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 14.

³¹ Gunnar Robert Almgren, *Health Care Politics, Policy, and Services: a Social Justice Analysis*, New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2007, pg. 206.

³² *Ibid.*, pg. 206.

³³ "Maria Boswell Flake," *Find a Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=41503307> accessed July 18, 2017. This is contrary to the brief biography of Flake in the Houston Metropolitan Research Center's Vertical Files which says she was born in Putnam County, Georgia and moved to Wetumka with her mother and stepfather, a Mr. Smith, early in her life.

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Institute in Wetumpka. On June 8, 1848 she married Dr. James J. Flake in Coosa County, Alabama.³⁴ The family was prominent, educated and owned slaves.

James and Maria Flake, along with Maria's widowed mother Harriet Smith and her brother Peter C. Boswell, moved to Texas sometime after their marriage. Smith purchased farms for her son and son-in-law. Dr. Flake opened a drug store and built a house for his family in San Jacinto County, Texas. In 1851, the Flakes had a daughter, Sarah. The Flakes later had a second daughter who died in infancy.³⁵

In September 1854, a hurricane struck the Gulf Coast between Galveston and Matagorda, leveling Matagorda and causing heavy damage further inland, including the Flake's San Jacinto County property.³⁶ The Flakes, her mother Harriet Smith, and their slave Diana, relocated to Houston, settling in a house at the corner of San Jacinto and Texas Avenue.³⁷ A rendering of the house shows a small white cottage with a garden surrounded by a white fence and it was there Maria Eliza Boswell Flake resided until her death.³⁸ Four years after their arrival in Houston, James and Sarah Flake were among the 175 deaths from Houston's yellow fever outbreak in 1858.³⁹ Flake never remarried, and along with other prominent Houston women such as Mrs. William Marsh Rice, helped care for Civil War soldiers in Houston area hospitals.⁴⁰ Although it is unclear which specific hospitals the women visited, the Rice house, now known as the Nichols Rice Cherry House, was used for a military hospital at the start of the war.⁴¹

In 1865, Maria Flake began a school in her house at San Jacinto and Texas Avenue where students were "tutored not only in the 'three R's,' but in finer things so dear to a soul that breathed all of the infer things of the old South. For Mrs. Flake was to the manner born."⁴² Flake's obituary refers to the endeavor as a "select school for young ladies and young gentlemen."⁴³ The school closed in 1872.⁴⁴ Research has not uncovered any other activities or organizations that garnered Flake's patronage.

Maria Boswell Flake died on November 24, 1915 at her house on San Jacinto at Texas Avenue.⁴⁵ She was buried on November 26th next to her mother in Houston's Glenwood Cemetery.⁴⁶ The Flake family commemorative granite

³⁴ Ancestry.com. *Alabama, Select Marriages, 1816-1942* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. Original data: *Alabama, Marriages, 1816-1957*. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.

³⁵ "The Original Home of Maria Boswell Flake", pamphlet.

³⁶ "The Original Home of Maria Boswell Flake", pamphlet.; Dunn, Roy Sylvan, "Hurricanes," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ybh01> accessed July 18, 2017.

³⁷ Houston City Directory, 1890, page 177. Accessed via Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. The 1897 City Directory state 603 San Jacinto; yet the 1890 directory says 101. This is likely to the renumbering of the street addresses.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "The Original Home of Maria Boswell Flake," pamphlet.; and Burns, Chester R., "Epidemic Diseases," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/sme01> accessed July 18, 2017.

⁴⁰ "The Original Home of Maria Boswell Flake", pamphlet.

⁴¹ The Nichols Rice Cherry house was constructed in c. 1850 for Gen. Ebenezer Nichols at Congress and San Jacinto on the county courthouse square in downtown Houston. The General sold the house to William Marsh Rice in 1856. It was relocated twice and is now part of the historic buildings managed by The Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park. The house is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) and one of the early buildings documented for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The HABS drawings and photographs are in the Library of Congress in Washington DC and available online: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/search/?co=hh&q=nichols%20rice%20cherry>. ; Muir, Andrew Forest, "Rice, William Marsh," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fri03> accessed July 18, 2017.

⁴² "Pioneer Resident Died in Old Home," *Houston Post*, November 25, 1915, Page 7.

⁴³ "Pioneer Resident Died in Old Home," *Houston Post*, November 25, 1915

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Pioneer Resident Died in Old Home," *Houston Post*, November 25, 1915, page 7.

⁴⁶ Glenwood Cemetery Burial Records.

http://www.glenwoodcemetery.org/search/?name=maria&lastname=flake&date_from=11%2F25%2F1915&date_to=03%2F30%2F1916. Accessed July 23, 2017.

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monument with a figure of the Virtue of Hope is noted in *Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery*, a book of the history, art and architecture of the cemetery.⁴⁷

Flake's obituary in November 1915 in the *Houston Post* includes an interview with Media McDonald Flake, identified as her body servant, or personal maid. The obituary includes two paragraphs about Media and her domestic service to Maria Flake as her "body servant." Though the article notes that Media was born after the Civil War, and therefore the end of slavery, her family was all formerly slaves of the Boswells and were brought to Texas from Alabama:

BODY SERVANT HER CONSTANT COMPANION

"Alabama suh," explained Media McDonald Flake, her body servant, when questioned as to Mrs. Flake's birthplace. Media probably knows more about Mrs. Flake than any living soul, even her earliest pupils. Media's great grandfather and great grandmother belonged in the Boswell family in Alabama, where Miss Maria Eliza Boswell was born April 22, 1834. The exact place of birth was Wetumpka. "Maria Eliza's grandfather, Dr. Boswell, dressed the wounds of Mr. George Washington at the battle of Horseshoe Bend," said Media.⁴⁸ She spoke in the vernacular with which 47 years close service with a cultured woman of the old and aristocratic South had endowed her. . . .

Media's mother, Diana, who was a servant in slavery time to Mrs. Boswell, followed the "young missis" to Texas. She lived to rear Media and turn over to Media the care of "a Boswell." How faithful Media's work has been performed is testified to by the simple statement that she is 47 years old and has been servant to Miss Maria Eliza for nearly that entire period. She has been almost constantly by her side, especially during the past 12 years, when Mrs. Flake's eyesight began to fail.⁴⁹

Flake lived her final years frugally, in order to leave as much money with her estate as possible. Her obituary notes that her house never upgraded for electricity or gas.⁵⁰ Ultimately, Flake left behind a \$75,000 estate, the vast majority of which was intended for establishing the Flake Home. Flake did set aside \$1000 for Media McDonald as well as some furniture, linens, and hangings which speaks to the closeness of their relationship.⁵¹ Additional belongings were set aside for McDonald's brothers Charley and William.⁵² Records indicate that McDonald did not live at Flake's Texas and San Jacinto home, in fact owning property on Block 242, South Side Buffalo Bayou.⁵³ A block with that legal description does not appear to exist anymore, though it was likely located in the area known as the Fourth Ward, a predominantly freedman's community. No other records on McDonald have been identified.

The Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women

Maria Flake's mother died in 1889, and it was in this time that she envisioned a home for elderly women with no close remaining family.⁵⁴ A 1955 *Houston Post* article notes that "the home is the dream of the late Mrs. Flake, who said nothing touched her more deeply than the loneliness of an elderly woman."⁵⁵ Flake originally wanted the home constructed on her property at Texas Avenue and San Jacinto, however, she recognized the neighborhood was changing

⁴⁷ Turner, Suzanne and Joanne Seale Wilson. *Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery, 1871-2009*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2010, page 156.

⁴⁸ Though this is the direct quote from the article, SWCA would like to note that the Battle of Horseshoe Bend is a battle from the War of 1812, and President Washington died in 1799.

⁴⁹ "Pioneer Resident Died in Old Home," *Houston Post*, November 25, 1915, page 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident," *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915, Page 13.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Real Estate Transfers." *Houston Post*, May 24, 1901.

⁵⁴ *Find a Grave*.

⁵⁵ Mary Blount, "Flake Home Embodies a Dream: 650 Years' Living," *Houston Post*, June 16, 1955.

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and would “in a few years be in the heart of the business section” of Houston.⁵⁶ She amended her will to add a provision for her trustees to sell her property and construct the home in a different location, specifying that it be within an eight-block radius of the courthouse. Flake envisioned a brick and stone clad, two-story building with enough room to house ten residents and a matron, all in separate rooms. Over the front entrance, Flake wanted the name of the home engraved. She instructed her trustees to use most of her furnishings in the home and most of the funds from her estate and all the proceeds of the sale of her property were set aside to cover construction costs.⁵⁷ A copy of her will has not been identified.

The trustees named in Maria Flake’s will were all men and included C. W. Harral, J. T. Scott, William Cochran, and J. C. Hutcheson Jr. The board of managers, named in the will to run and manage the home were all women and included Mrs. Dr. D. F. Stuart, Mrs. Seabrook Sydnor, Mrs. Jesse Howe, Mrs. H. Baldwin Rice and Mrs. James K. P. Gillaspie.⁵⁸ They could not accommodate her request for a building close to the courthouse as that area, like the location of her house at San Jacinto and Texas Avenue, was part of the growing central business district. Instead, the trustees purchased the house at 1103 Berry Street, then only nine years old, and opened The Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women there in 1922 with six residents.⁵⁹ The property at the time consisted of the main house and a garage with a second floor apartment. SWCA presumes the matron resided in the apartment over the garage, while the main house included the remaining ten bedrooms, hospital room, living room, dining room, and kitchen. Though there is not absolute certainty in the locations for the original ten bedrooms, evidence suggests there were at least four bedrooms downstairs with the hospital room and shared spaces; the remaining six bedrooms were upstairs. In order to accommodate all the residents, the east sun room porch would have been subdivided on both floors. The enclosed port cochere likely housed both the hospital room and a bedroom, while the fourth downstairs bedroom would have been located at the rear of the house behind the kitchen.

While the 1918 city directory for Houston does not identify any nursing homes, homes for old persons, or indigent homes, there were at least two such care facilities in existence in around the time of Mrs. Flake’s death in 1915. Further investigation yielded information suggesting that a facility known as Sheltering Arms was established in 1897 initially aimed at caring for old women, but was open to women of all ages. As of 1897 it had 30 “inmates,” received private donations, and was largely affiliated with the Episcopal Church, though they admitted individuals of many Christian denominations.⁶⁰ A later 1904 report on Benevolent Institutions across the United States, indicated Sheltering Arms was located at 1517 Hutchins Street in Houston as a permanent “home for aged and friendless women” run by the Sheltering Arms Association, with no entrance fee.⁶¹ By the late 1920s, it was recorded receiving public funding and recognized as a noteworthy welfare organization.⁶² Similarly, St. Anthony’s Home appeared in Houston in the first decade of the 20th century. As of 1912 the home was functioning as a Catholic aged facility for men and women run by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word.⁶³ During WWI, St. Anthony’s Home had 65 male and female occupants, 45 of which lived there at no

⁵⁶ “Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident,” *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915, Page 13.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident,” *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915, page 13.

⁵⁹ “Formal Opening of Maria B. Flake Home For Old Women to Be on Monday,” *Houston Post*, May 21, 1922, Page 10.

⁶⁰ “Sheltering Arms Report,” *Houston Daily Post*, April 3, 1898, pg 13.

⁶¹ Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce and Labor, “Special Reports: Benevolent Institutions 1904,” Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905, page 260. Available on Google Books

<https://books.google.com/books?id=NqIzPl1qj4EC&pg=PA332&lpg=PA332&dq=sheltering+arms+1904+houston&source=bl&ots=S-zhK4rxEH&sig=ySbiSbcu89a1dYFjWW1hlXgqVc&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi7gL7cp57XAhUGWSYKHcjsAQ6AEIODAD#v=onepage&q=sheltering%20arms%201904%20houston&f=false>, accessed November 1, 2017.

⁶² Dorothy M. Hoskins, “Progress in Philanthropy and Welfare Work: City and County Reach Helping Hands in the Hidden By-ways,” *Civics For Houston*, Volume 1, Number 5, May 1928, page 5, 18. Available on Google Books

https://books.google.com/books?id=xOkTAAAYAAJ&pg=RA1-PA18&lpg=RA1-PA18&dq=st.+anthony%27s+home+for+aged+almeda+road+houston&source=bl&ots=2LJX2xJqNw&sig=O_IjtybOTdJov0QuVPDdq-DNHUI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiKrdCe_Z3XAhVK7oMKHbJHAAsQ6AEIQjAF#v=onepage&q=st.%20anthony%27s%20home%20for%20aged%20almeda%20road%20houston&f=false, accessed November 1, 2017.

⁶³ “Christmas Cheer Permeates City’s Institutions Today: Fifty-Eight Women with Dependent Children Guests of Sharks Club for Christmas Dinner,” *The Houston Post*, December 25, 1912, page 5.

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cost.⁶⁴ According to a 1928 *Civics for Houston* article, St. Anthony's was admitting homeless individuals of all religious backgrounds and likely because of this, the organization receiving funding from the Community Chest.⁶⁵

It's important to note the existence of another home, the Pauline Sterne Wolff Memorial Home created in 1921, by the estate of Mrs. Pauline Wolff. She left her personal home and \$100,000 to create a home for "indigent windows and minor orphans of Jewish parentage in Houston."⁶⁶ While this home opened before the Flake Home in 1922, it's possible that the idea for the Flake Home, which was well circulated in newspapers upon Mrs. Flake's death in 1915, influenced the establishment of the Wolff Memorial Home. When compared to these other welfare organizations that appeared around the same time, the Flake Home was unique in its sole focus on admitting a small number of elderly women in need. The Flake Home is believed to be the only one of these comparable welfare organizations to have an extant historic building.

The 1942 City Directory, however, does list Flake Home under "Homes and Asylums" along with fifteen other institutions. Some of the other Homes were intended for children, including the Bayland Orphans Home and the De Pelchin Faith Home and Children's Bureau of Houston. There were additionally three other homes for the elderly, and at least one other home specifically for women. It is unknown how the other home for women was funded or if it had a religious affiliation.

Throughout its history, the Flake Home did have specific eligibility requirements. Eligible women had to be at least 60 as of 1941, and later 65 years old in 1953, white, and residents of Harris County for at least five years prior to application.⁶⁷ The home was also intended to be nonsectarian.⁶⁸ Women who had lived in Houston the longest were given preferential treatment for admittance.⁶⁹ All residents had to demonstrate significant financial hardship and be without close family who could provide care. Women "deranged in mind or afflicted with any incurable, contagious or infectious disease" were ineligible for residency. The Flake Home had a physician who conducted physicals for all applicants.⁷⁰ A 1941 publication from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that the home was only one of five Homes for the Aged in Houston at the time. The Flake Home was listed alongside the Grace Home for Aged which did not list a minimum age, the St. Anthony Home for Aged, which had an age requirement of 68, Sheltering Arms (relocated to 2809 Leeland Avenue) required occupants be 65, and the Wolff (Pauline Sterne) Memorial Home had no age listed. These other homes did not have an entrance fee listed.⁷¹

By 1953, the Flake Home required applicants pay – or have paid on their behalf – a \$500 admission fee. A resident's property was assigned to the supervision of the Board of Trustees, who paid the resident interest during her lifetime.⁷² Maria Flake stipulated in her will that residents leave their estates to the home, providing additional funds for maintenance and operating expenses.⁷³ Women who left before they died were required to repay the home \$50 for every month they

⁶⁴ "Appeal Made for St. Anthony's Home: Help of Houston Catholics Is Being Solicited," *The Houston Post*, September 16, 1917, page 27.

⁶⁵ Dorothy M. Hoskins, "Progress in Philanthropy and Welfare Work: City and County Reach Helping Hands in the Hidden By-ways", *Civics For Houston*, Volume 1, Number 5, May 1928, page 5, 18.

⁶⁶ "Will Provides for \$100,000 Home for Widows and Orphans," *The Galveston Daily News*, February 15, 1921.

⁶⁷ "The Maria Boswell Flake Home", 1953 application packet, Nursing Home vertical file, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas.

⁶⁸ "Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident," *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915, Page 13.

⁶⁹ "Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident." *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915.

⁷⁰ "The Maria Boswell Flake Home," 1953 application packet.

⁷¹ United States Bureau of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Homes for the Aged in the United States," Bulletin No. 677, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941, page 114. Available on Google Books

<https://books.google.com/books?id=IjXKLvldpUC&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false>, accessed November 1, 2017. Sheltering Arms Home for Aged Women appears on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Houston 1924-1951, Volume 4, Sheet 464 at 2809 Leeland Avenue, near the Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building at 2720 Leeland Avenue.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Home Provided for Old Women by Will of Pioneer Resident." *Houston Post*, November 27, 1915.

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had lived there. Mrs. Cora Holmes chose this path after oil was found on her family's property rather than give her an entire estate to the Flake Home following her death.⁷⁴

Residents helped with household chores, including daily care of their rooms, and were provided meals in the dining room.⁷⁵ The women each decorated their rooms to their own tastes, some bringing their own furniture, although much of the home was still furnished with Maria Flake's possessions. Women were required to provide notice to the matron if they left for out of town visits, and it was recommended that they alert the matron if they left the home during the day or to run errands.⁷⁶ However, their time was their own. An elevator provided access to second floor rooms.⁷⁷

The number of residents fluctuated over time. A 1948 article that revealed that the Flake Home was not always full, noting that the house was only at half capacity at the time due to insufficient funds to cover the overhead expenses for a full ten women. The original bequest from Flake's will and the additional estates added to the Flake Home's accounts had proven insufficient against the tides of inflation.⁷⁸ However, they soon found themselves full again. An article on the home in 1955 indicated that the ten residents all had activities outside the home, including an 82 year old music teacher.

Other early residents at the Flake Home also worked prior to moving to the home, mostly as teachers and seamstresses. Most of the women were devout Christians, though of varying denominations in keeping with the Home's nonsectarian mandate. Almost none of the women were native Houstonians, having moved to the city from as close as Galveston or as far as Georgia.⁷⁹ Though never explicitly stated, house matron Mrs. Aiken indicates in her account of the home that many of the women moved to the home out of financial necessity. One woman moved to the home after her own home, used for boarders, burned down; another woman after being run over by an automobile.⁸⁰ Many other women found themselves widowed and childless.⁸¹

In 1961, the name changed to The Maria Boswell Flake Nursing Home until it closed in 1971. There are no records confirming why it closed, however, the introduction of Medicaid in 1965 may have contributed to its closure once the government began providing healthcare for the elderly. The closure may also be tied to suburbanization and the lack of other residential properties in the area as the South End transformed into Midtown.

As of 2017, the Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women Foundation, with Houston Trust Company serving as Agent, continues its mission to provide room and board for elderly Houston women. The Foundation is governed by three women trustees and has given between one and three grants per year to Brazos Towers at Bayou Manor, operated by Brazos Presbyterian Homes, Inc.⁸² The Foundation's records are not available for public research.

In 1972, Adkins Architectural Antiques purchased the property and ran an architectural salvage and antique store in the house until December 2016 when they closed and the company moved to an online only presence and rebranded as Adkins Antique Hardware Co.⁸³ The same month, the current owners purchased the property and plan to utilize the state and federal tax credit programs to rehabilitate the property for use as a law office.

⁷⁴ Mrs. Chase Aikin, "History of the Flake Home," c. 1943, pg. 2. Available at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

⁷⁵ "The Maria Boswell Flake Home," 1953 application packet.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Flake Home Embodies A Dream: 650 Years' Living," *Houston Post*, June 16, 1955, Section 1, Page 14.

⁷⁸ Andy Anderson, "Little Old Lady Finds Life Pleasant at Flake Home," *Houston Press*, January 13, 1948.

⁷⁹ Mrs. Chase Aikin, "History of the Flake Home," c. 1943, pg. 2. Available at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 4.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1-5.

⁸² Grantmakers, <https://www.grantmakers.io/profiles/v0/741395692-maria-boswell-flake-home-for-old-women-co-houston-trust-company/#people>.

This was additionally confirmed by Joe Patane at Houston Trust Company in a phone call on August 3, 2017.

⁸³ Adkins Architectural Hardware Co., <http://adkinsantiquehardware.com/about-us/>. Accessed July 23, 2017.

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Conclusion

The Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Social History at the local level of significance as the only remaining example of a small, privately-funded, nonsectarian elder care facility for women in Houston dating to the Progressive Era. Posthumously through her estate, benefactor Maria Boswell Flake aimed to provide a home for women of limited means and who were without family that who could meet the basic admission requirements, so long as space and funding allowed. Thought to be the first private home of its kind in Houston exclusively focused on elderly women in need, the home served as place where women could receive care and enjoy the comradery of fellow residents from 1922 until 1971. The Flake Home is also one of the only remaining examples of a single-family residences in the area and is emblematic of the early suburban development of Houston's South End.

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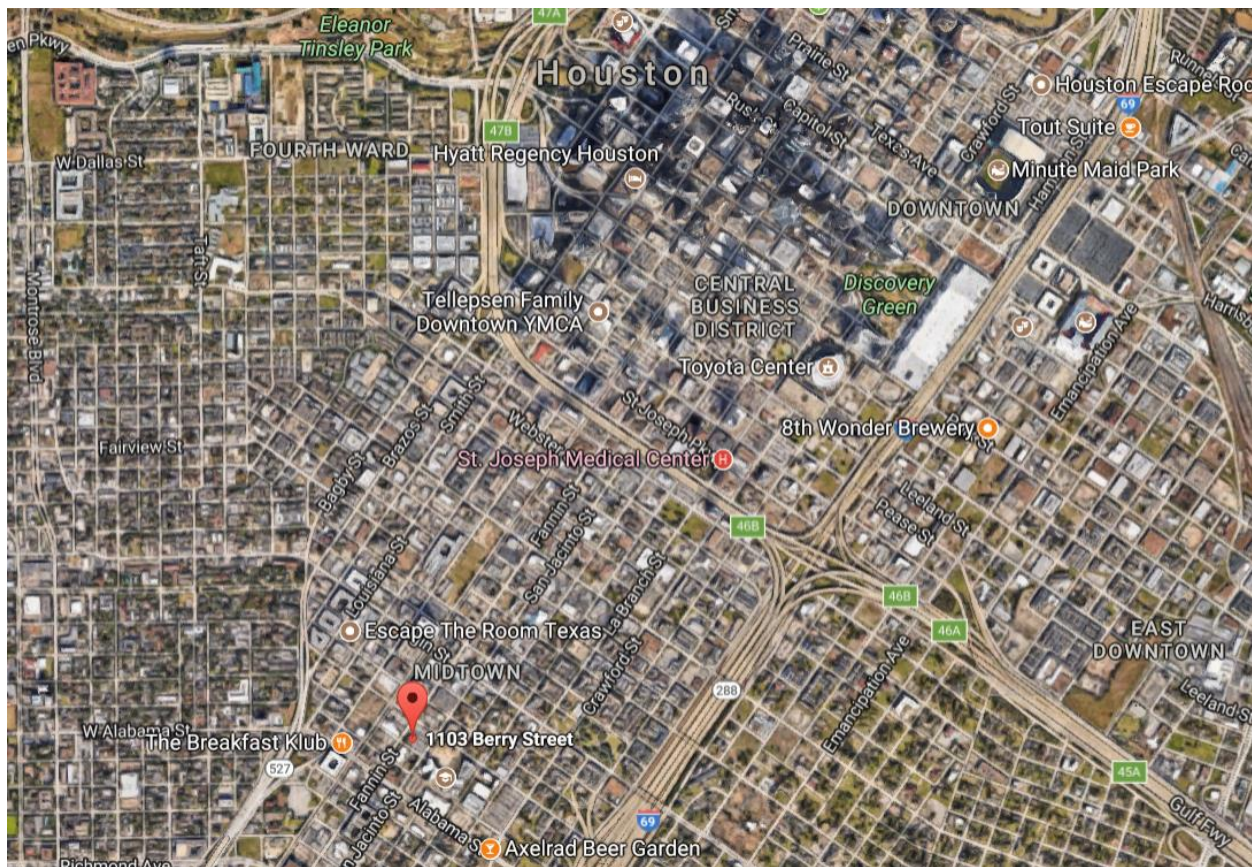
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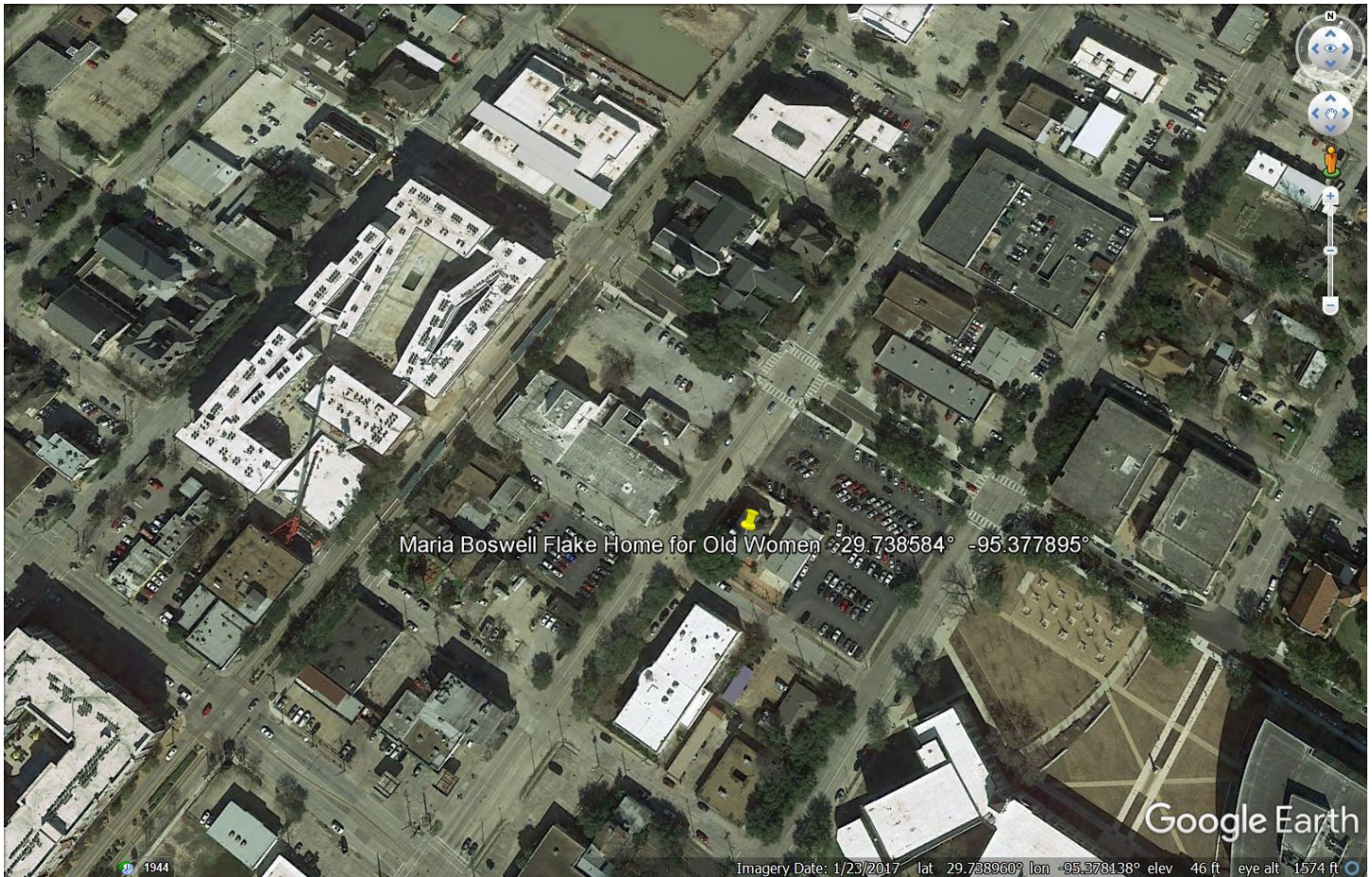
Map 1 – Harris County in Texas



Map 2 – Google Map showing Flake Home in proximity to downtown Houston, accessed August 18, 2017

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Map 3 – Google Earth aerial of Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women in Houston, accessed August 21, 2017

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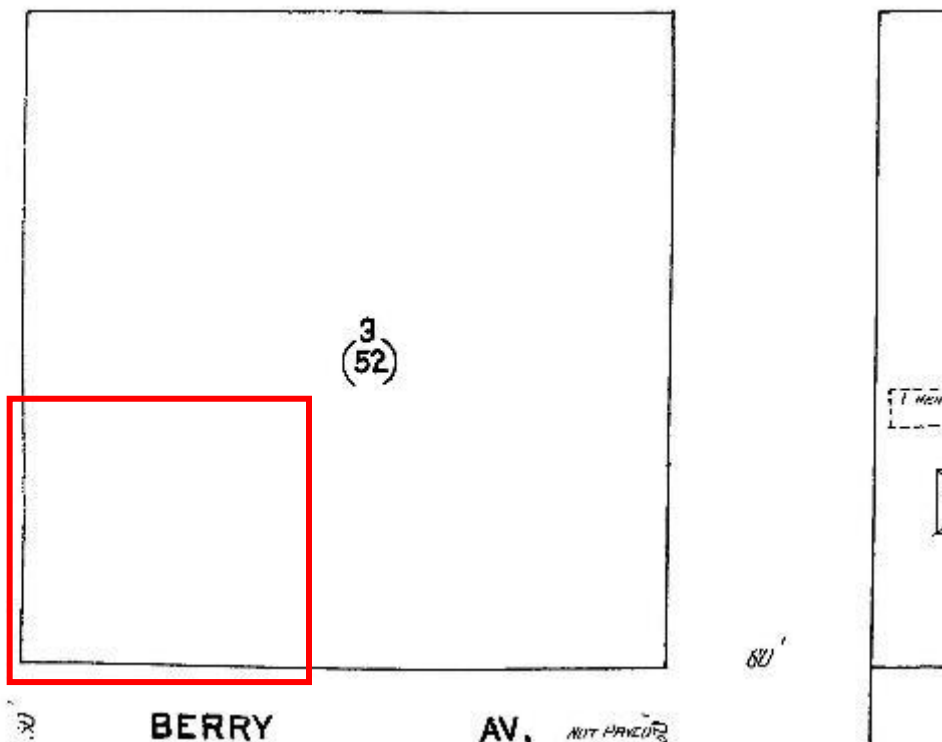
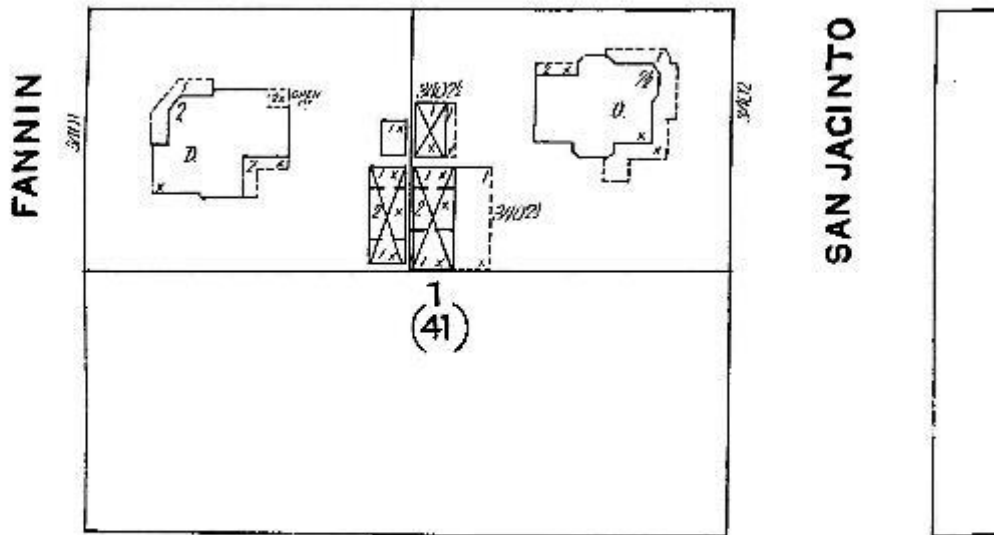


Figure 1 – Sanborn Map from 1907, volume 1, sheet 76

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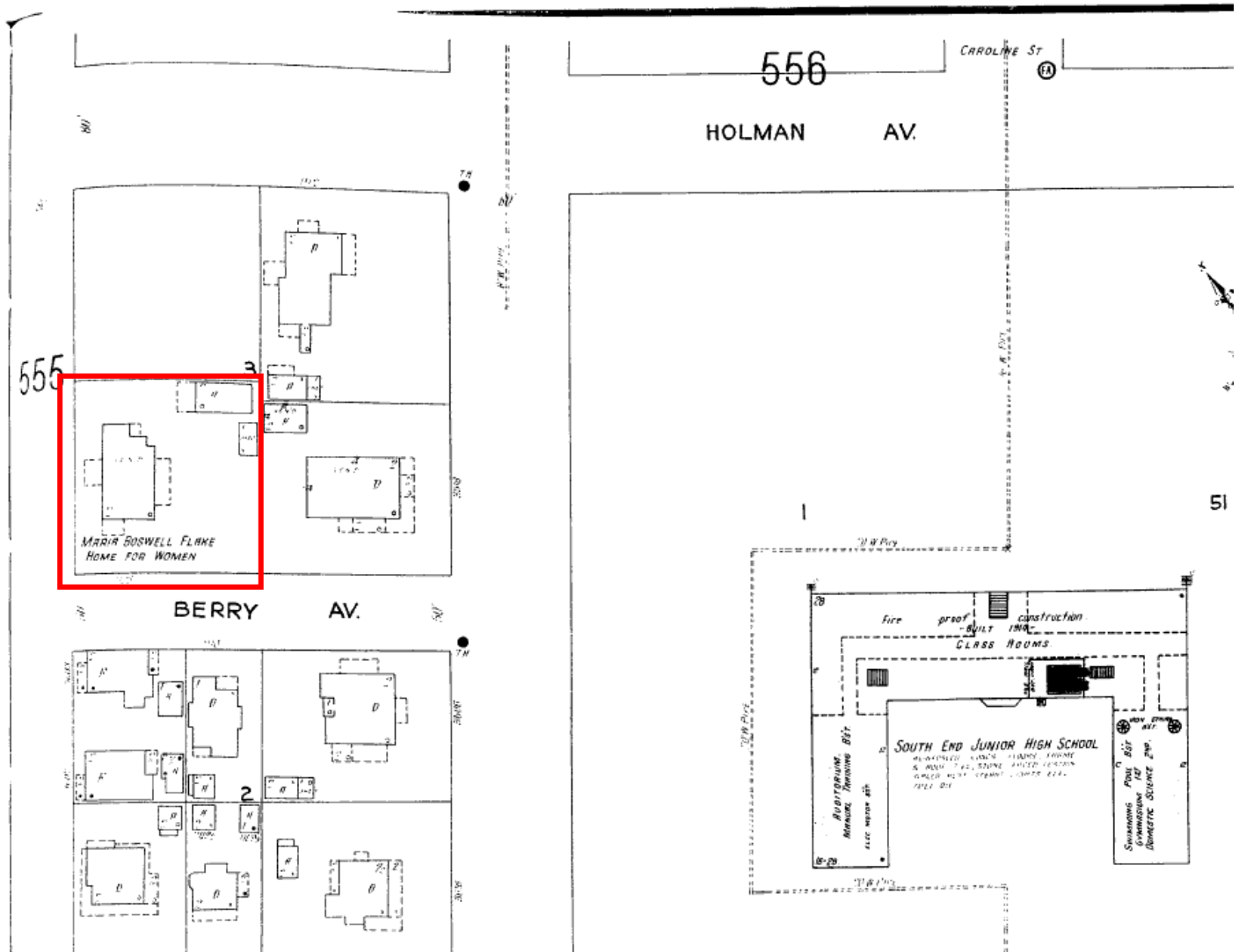


Figure 2 – Sanborn map from c. 1925, Volume 5, Sheet 564

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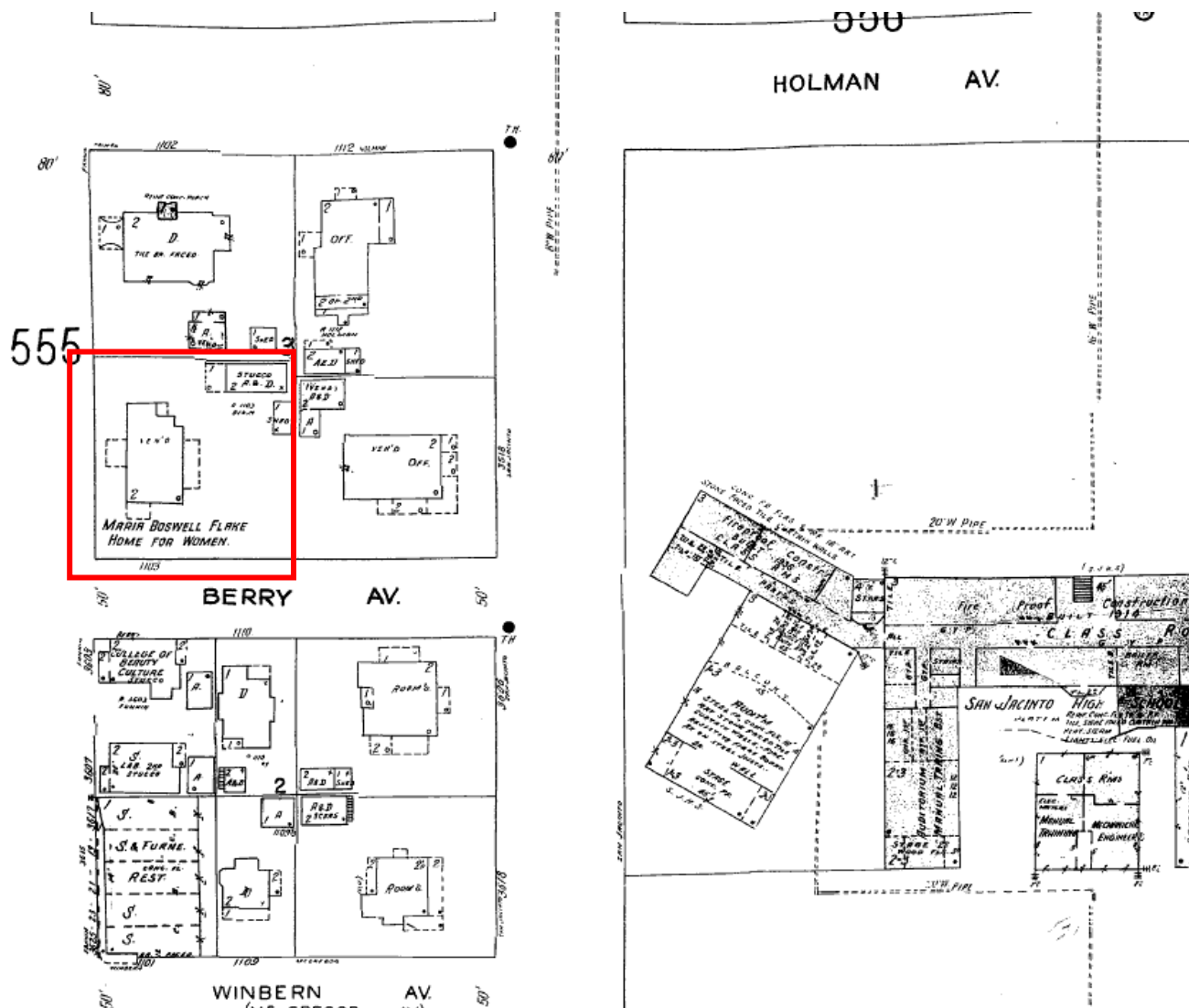


Figure 3 – Sanborn map from c. 1951, volume 5, sheet 564

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Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas

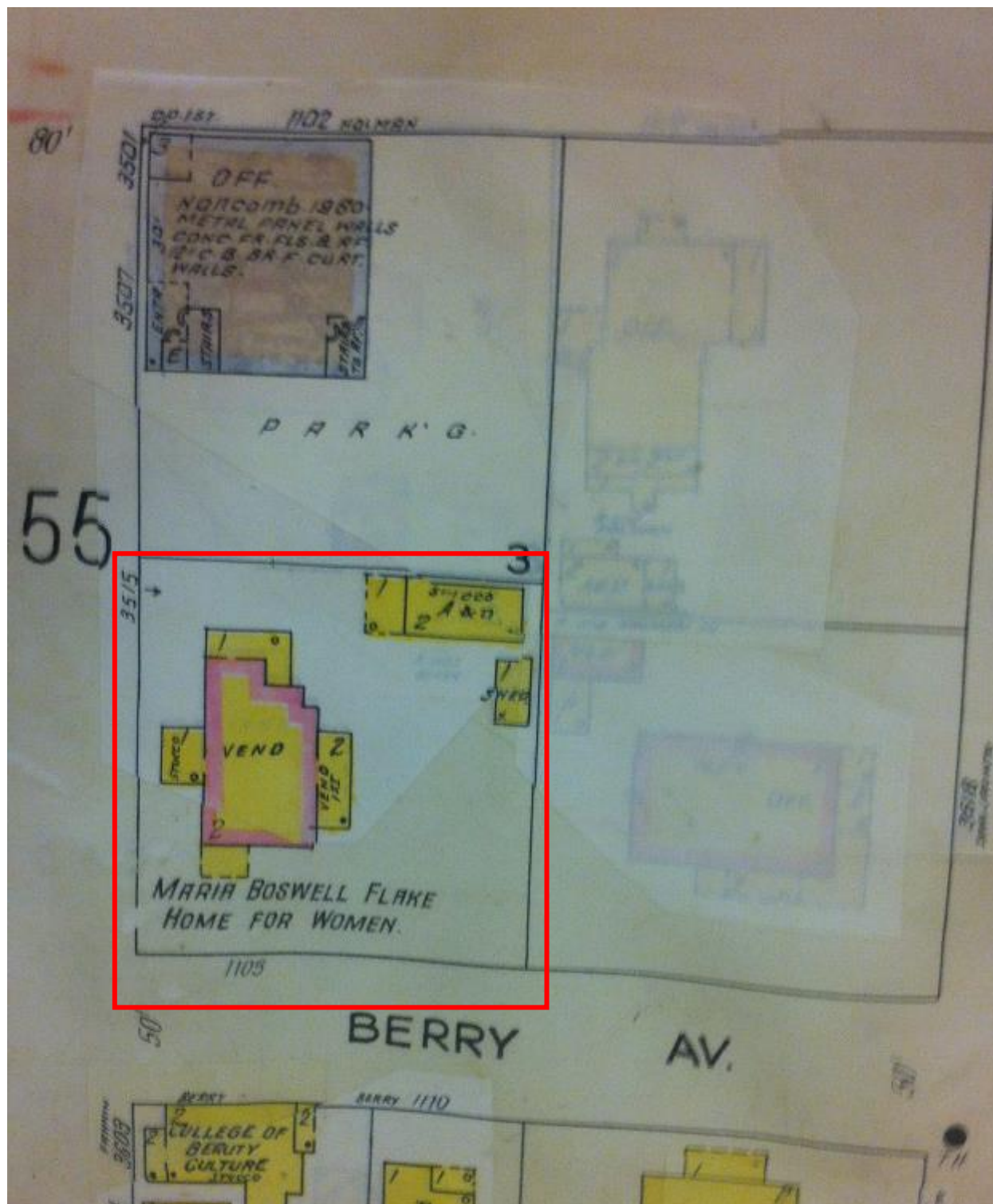
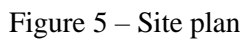


Figure 4 – Sanborn map, 1961, volume 5, sheet 564



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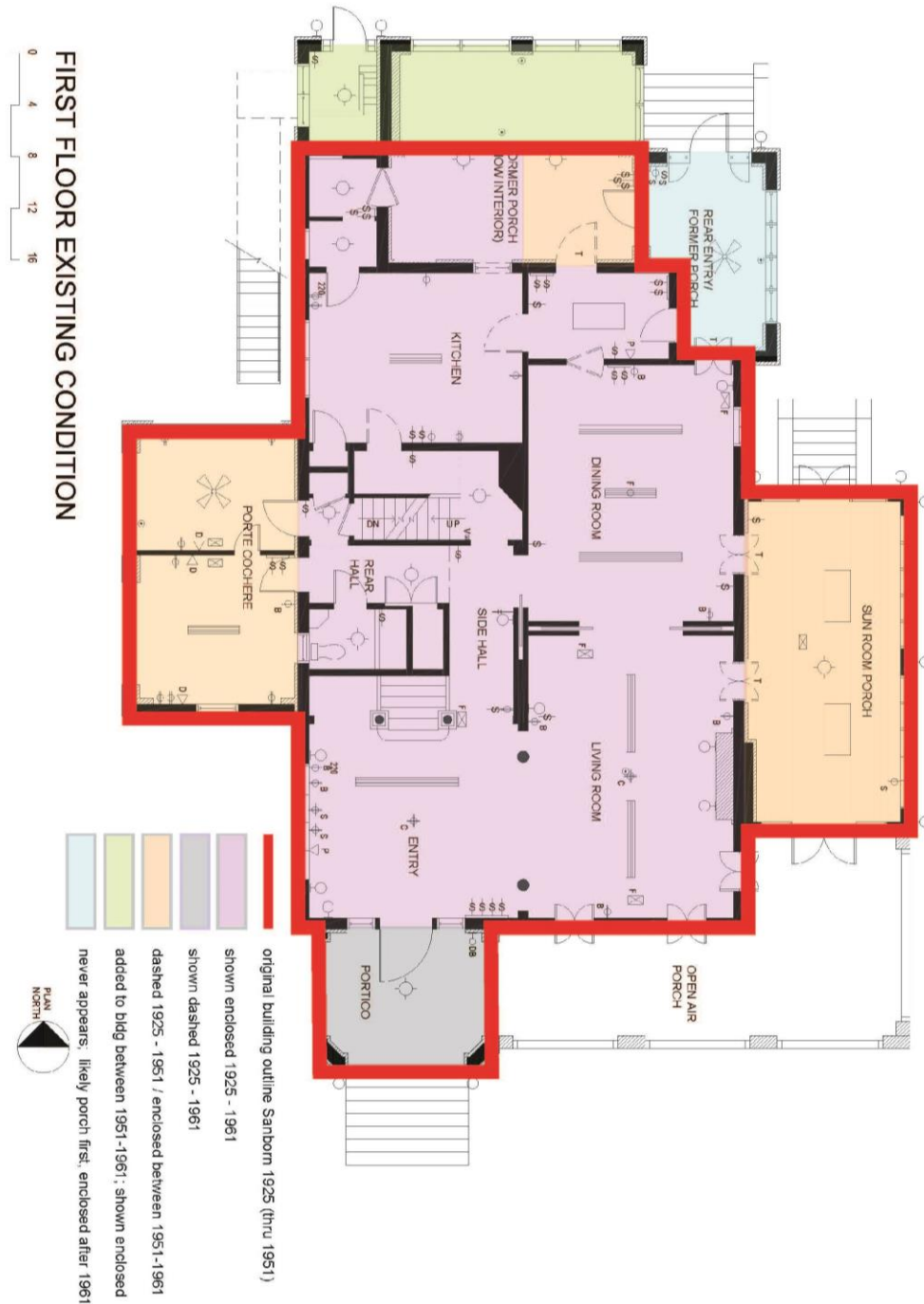


Figure 6 – First Floor Plan with color coded overlay of additions and improvements

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Figure 7 – Second Floor Plan with color coded overlay of additions and improvements

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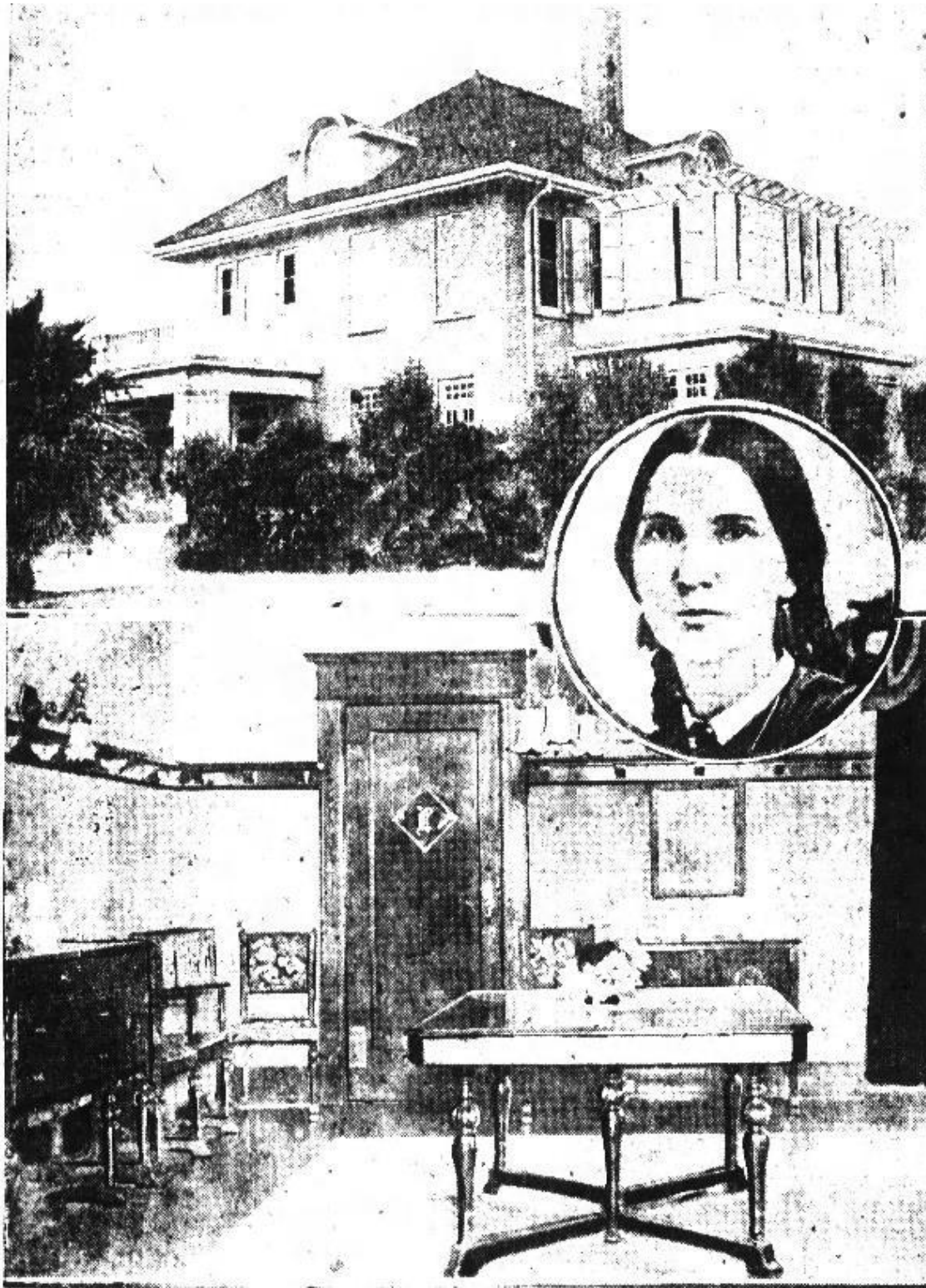


Figure 8 – Photo from May 21, 1922 *Houston Post* article announcing grand opening. Upper portion shows exterior, view northwest. Lower portion shows the dining room on the interior, view north.

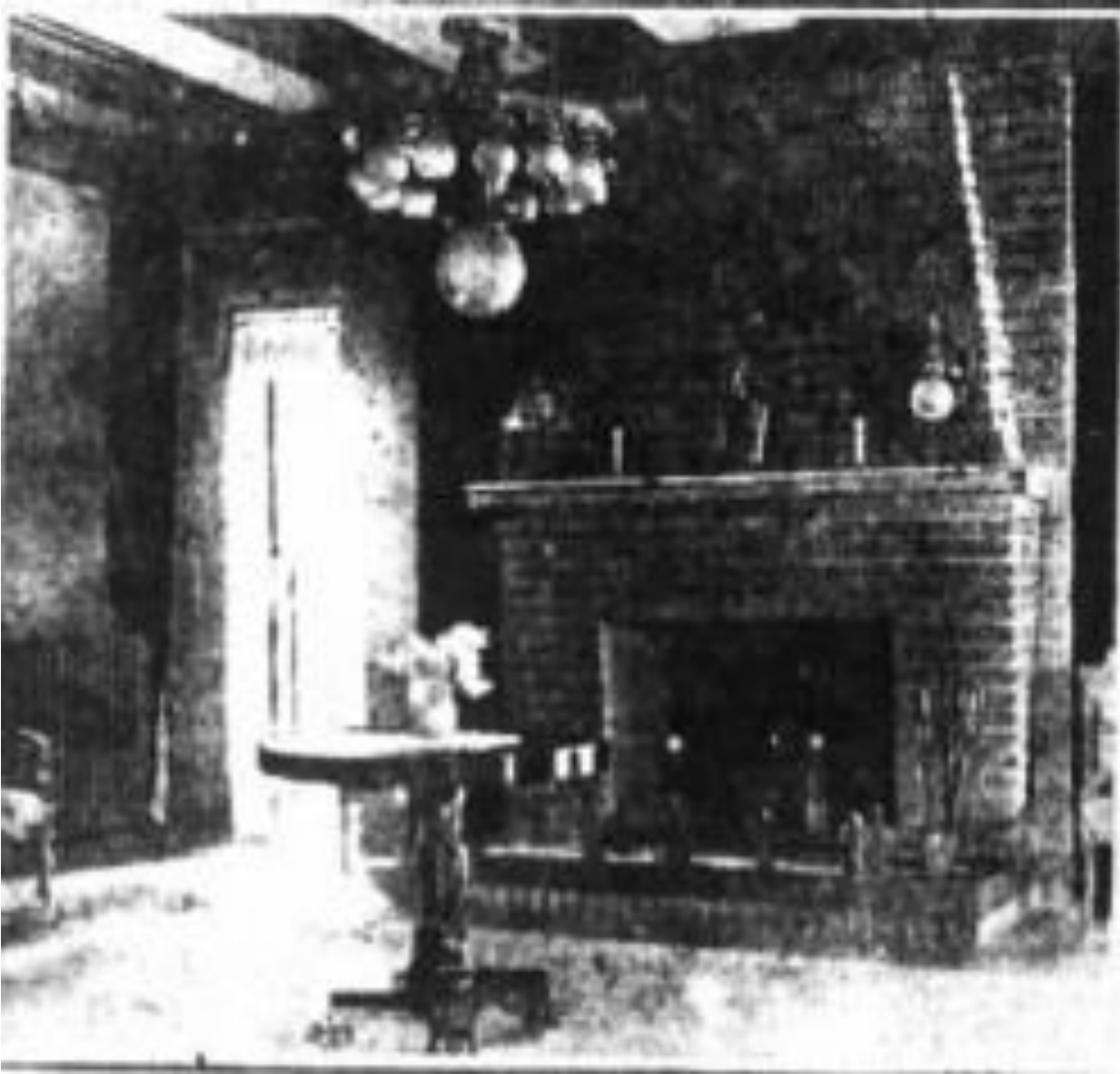


Figure 9 – Photo from May 21, 1922 *Houston Post* article showing the living room with original light fixtures, view west.



Figure 10 – Photo from January 13, 1948 *Houston Press* article on the Flake Home showing the fireplace in the living room, view northeast.

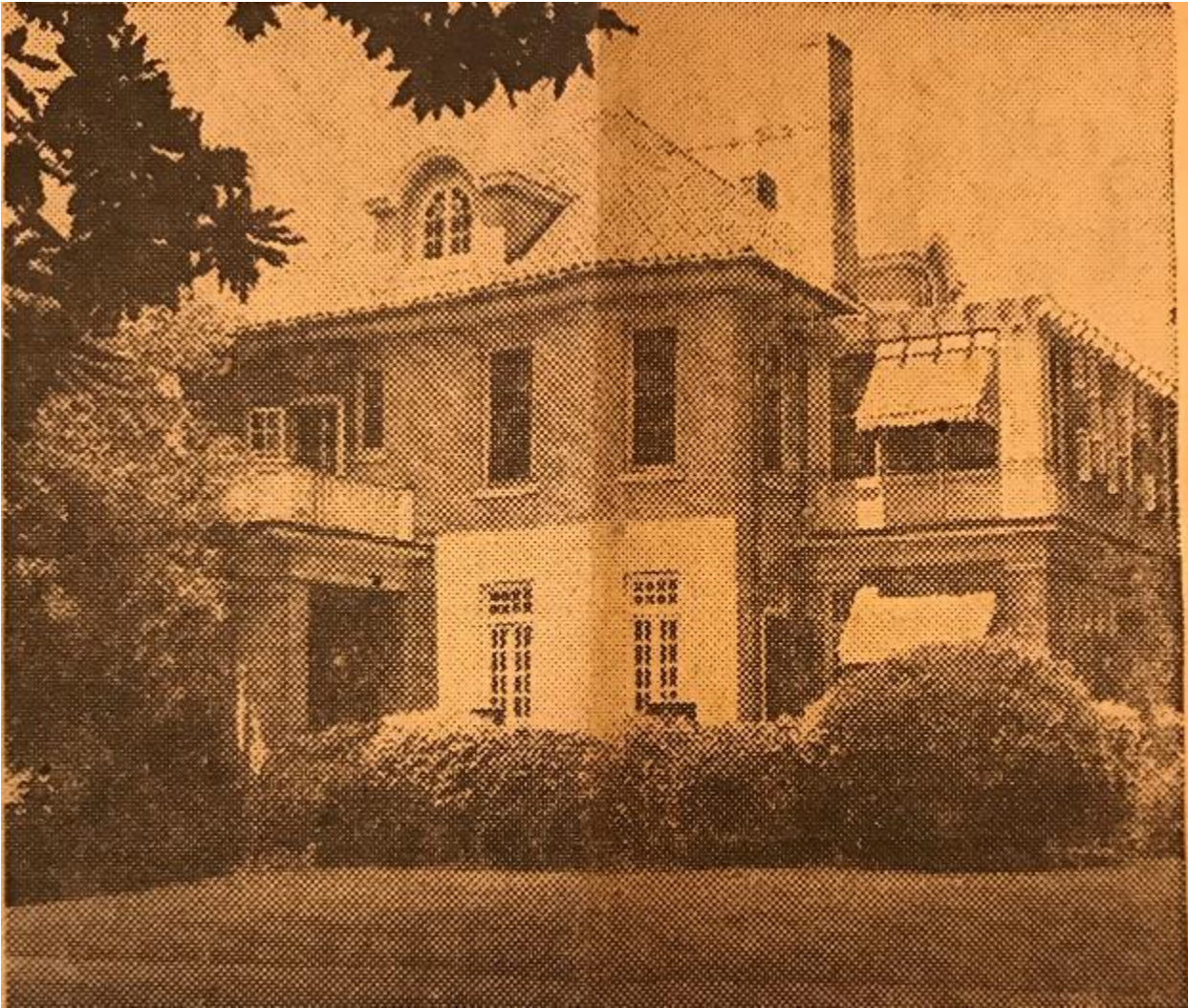


Figure 11 – Photo from June 16, 1955 *Houston Post* article on the Flake Home, view northwest. Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas



Photo 1 – South elevation and partial view east elevation, view northwest.

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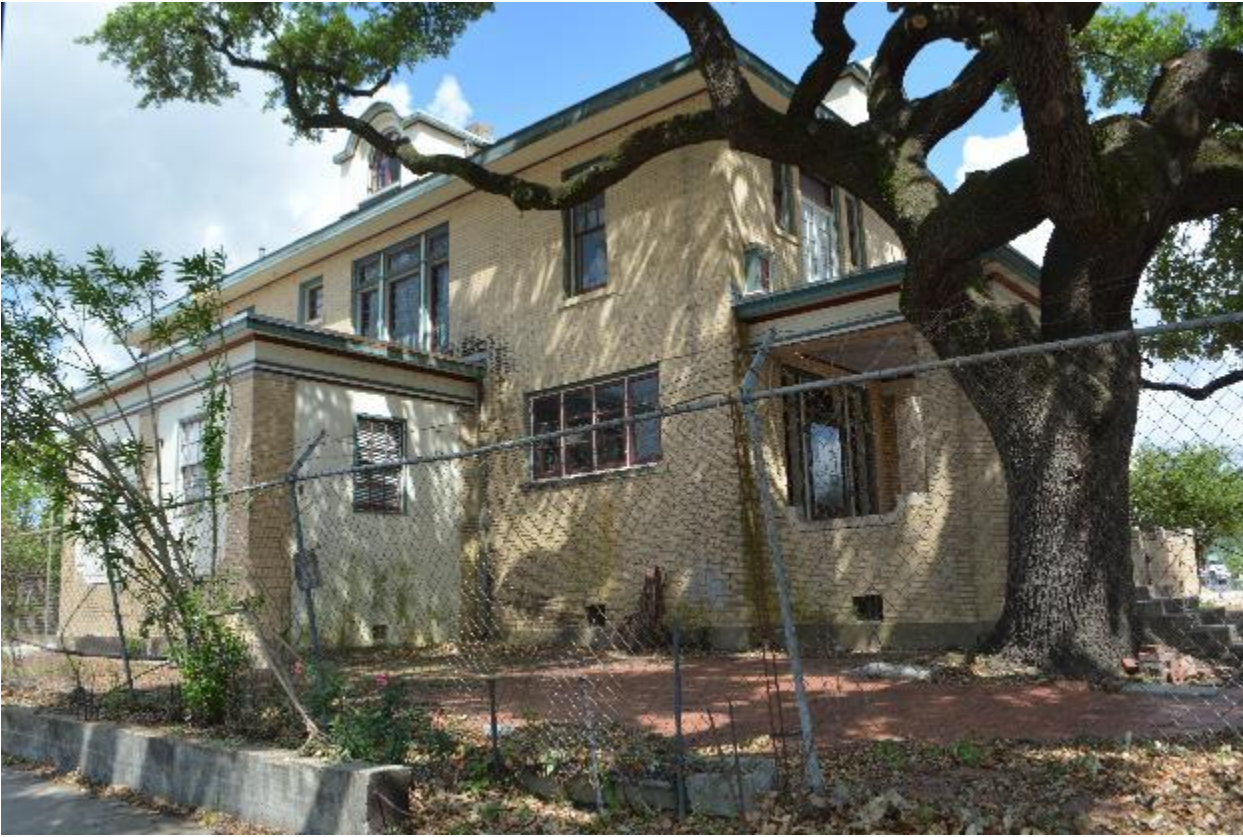


Photo 2 – West elevation and partial view south elevation, view northeast.

Maria Boswell Flake Home for Old Women, Houston, Harris County, Texas



Photo 3 – North and west elevations, view southeast.



Photo 4 – North elevation (right) and non-contributing metal storage building (left), view south.

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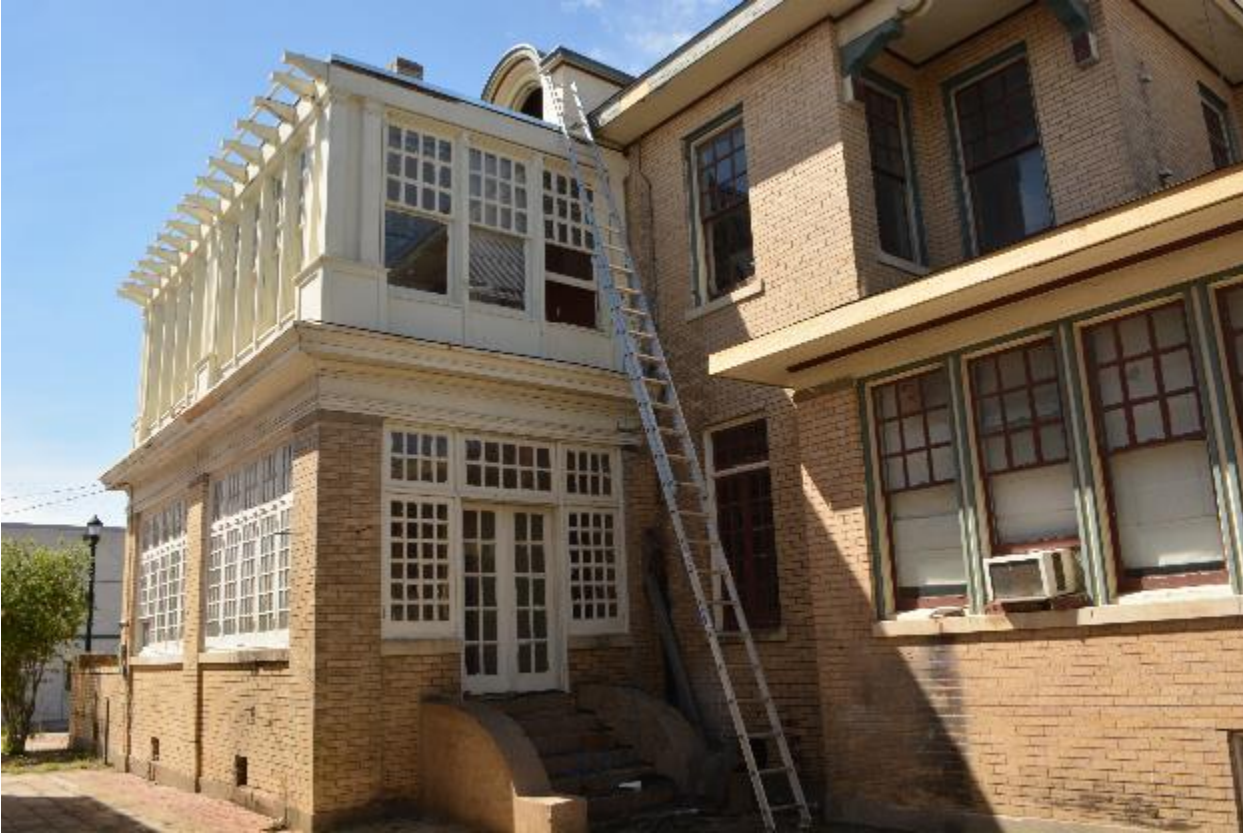


Photo 5 – East elevation (partial), view southwest.

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Photo 6 – Detail, front entrance on the south elevation, view north.



Photo 7 – Interior, first floor front entry hall and grand staircase, view north.



Photo 8 - Interior, first floor living room, view northwest towards entry hall (left) and dining room (right).



Photo 9 – Interior, first floor living room fireplace with dining room visible on left, view northeast.

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Photo 10 - Interior, first floor east porch, view southeast. A visible line on the wall and ceiling shows where the room was once subdivided.



Photo 11 - Interior, first floor stair hall view south. The unfinished wood on the wall and the change in ceiling materials above indicates this as the elevator's original location.



Photo 12 – Interior, second floor bedroom with fireplace, view northeast. A line on the floor indicates where there may once have been a wall to create a hallway to the porch (background).



Photo 13 – Interior, second floor former sleeping porch space, view southeast.



Photo 14 – Interior, second floor northwest bedroom, view southeast.



Photo 15 - Interior, first floor detail of column capitals in entry hall.



Photo 16 – Interior, second floor detail of original stained glass window located at the top of the grand staircase, view west.